DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 034 302 EA 002 623

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TITLE	Functions of Educational Specialists in the Schools, A Preliminary Analysis.
INSTITUTION	Columbia Univ., New York, N.Y. Inst. of Administrative Research.
PUB DATE	Nov 68
NOTE	6p.
JOURNAL CIT	IAR-Research Bulletin; v9 n1 p4-7 Nov 68
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.40
DESCRIPTORS	Counselor Functions, Elementary Schools, *Guidance Services, *Library Services, *Psychological Services, *Remedial Reading, School Surveys, Secondary Schools, *Specialists

ABSTRACT

This survey of elementary and secondary schools gathered information regarding the function of educational specialists. Four functions are analysed: remedial reading, guidance, psychological services, and library assistance. No real pattern evolved as to deployment of any one function at either school level. To examine the people with whom specialists spend their time, five categories of recipients were established: desk work, students, classroom teachers, other specialists, and with others. It was found that the function would relate to a recipient pattern (i.e., specialists in remedial reading work mostly with students and little if any with the other recipient categories). Specialists in guidance, however, distribute their time among all recipient categories. A related document is EA 002 629. (LN)

ED034302

Functions of Educational Specialists in the Schools
A Preliminary Analysis

ROBERT A. UTTER*

This study examines the deployment of specialists — those who assist, supplement, or replace the activities of classroom teachers. Earlier investigations in this area relied on job titles to identify specialists among school districts. The limitation in this method lies in trying to distinguish between titles used and functions performed. This investigation avoids titles. It identifies deployment practices on the basis of how specialists say they distribute their time among selected functions and categories of recipients.

A questionnaire to elicit information concerning functions, recipients, and levels of operation was developed and sent to forty-six member school districts of the Metropolitan School Study Council. Approximately 2000 questionnaires were completed and returned. After a program was written, the data collected were punched on cards and fed into a computer. Four functions (Remedial Reading, Guidance, Psychological Services, and Library Assistance) were selected for analysis for the reasons that (1) they are regarded as being pupil oriented, (2) they are considered important among the participating districts in terms of their high frequencies, and (3) they are involved in Federal legislation mainly through the National Defense Education Act and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

The data for these functions were arranged in standard score tables and presented in terms of Time Equivalents, a new measure offered as a feasible procedure for functional analysis. The supposition underlying this measurement is that the performance of a function can be measured and expressed as a mathematical quantity, which happens to be in this case, percentage of time. It is important to keep in mind that the results of this approach are based upon the respondents' perceptions of how they spend their time.

On the basis of the responses reported by the specialists, many different deployment practices were identified when each of the four functions was analyzed separately on the elementary, secondary, and system-wide levels of operation.

Specialists in some districts reported spending their time exclusively on one school level while others reported being involved with two or more levels. This latter group of specialists indicated that their distribution of time is generally uneven in the sense that one school level is stressed above the others. A considerable variation was found in the amount of time spent in the various school systems on the four functions.

To examine the people with whom specialists spend their time, five categories of recipients were established: **Desk Work, Students, Classroom Teachers, Other Specialists,** and **With Others.** It was discovered that specialists do not distribute their time equally among the recipients of their services. In this area, especially, there is a large number of different deployment practices among the four functions. Also, not all recipients are involved in the performance of each function: i.e., specialists in remedial reading work mostly with **Students** and spend little time with other recipients whereas specialists in guidance, in most cases, distribute their time among all the recipients. The number of specialists performing the function seems to influence how time is spent with recipients. The smaller staffs of specialists work with fewer categories of recipients than do the larger staffs.

It would seem that the percentages of time specialists say they spend on functions and with recipients can be collected and converted into time equivalents. The primary advantage gained with this method of investigation is that we can study who does what to whom and where irrespective of titles.

The accompanying tables illustrate how school districts regulate their staffing policy relative to specialists vs. classroom teachers. In Table I may be seen graphs of typical districts that emphasize classroom teachers in preference to non-classroom educational specialists with the result that the greater emphasis upon the latter reduces class size. Table 2 illustrates the opposite. These districts represent the group that emphasize specialists relative to classroom teachers, with the result that classes are larger than would be expected from the size of the total professional staff (NSA—numerical staff adequacy). Table 3 presents graphs of districts whose level of staff deployment in either category is about what would be expected, on the average, from the size of the district's total professional staff. In each table districts may be seen whose total staff (NSA—number of professional per 1000 pupils) ranges from high to low. Nevertheless, in each table the policy represented is the same with respect to relative emphasis upon specialists vs. classroom teachers. The scales are standard score scales based upon the data from districts.

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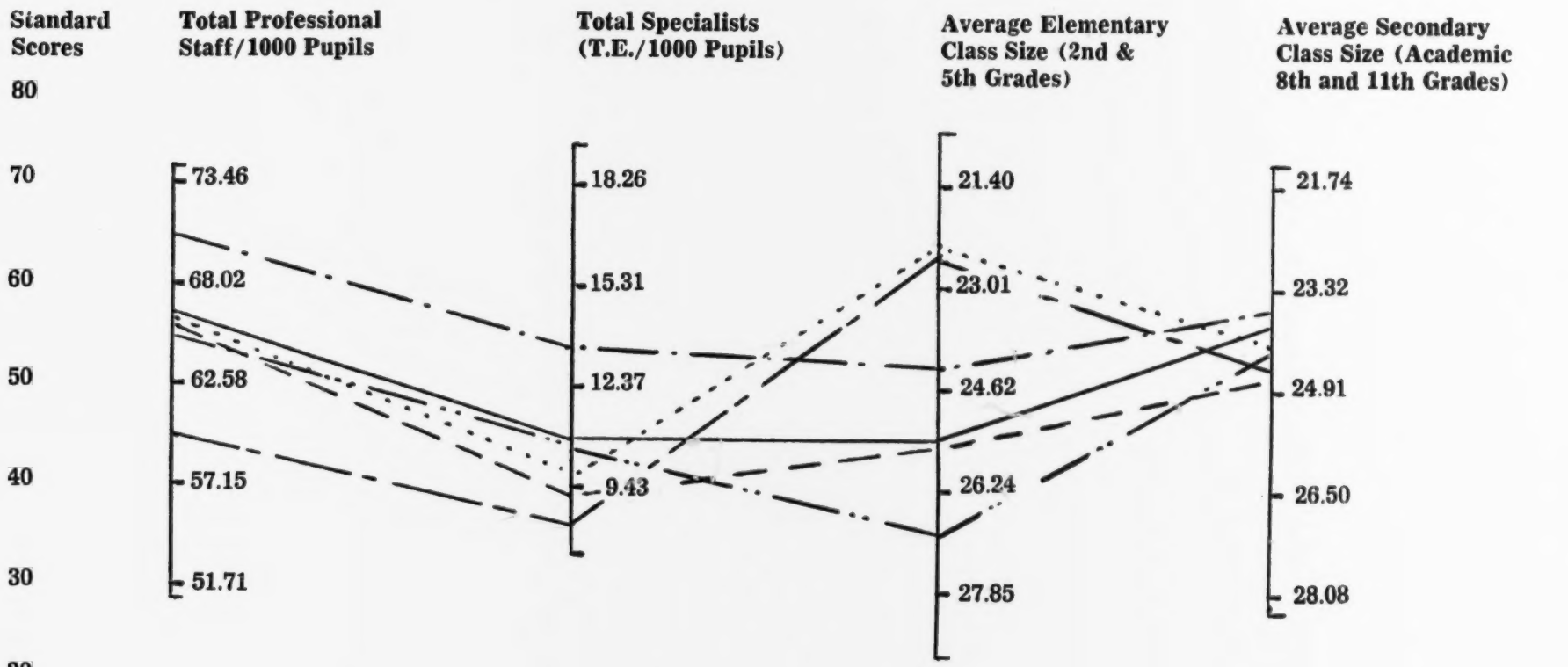
TABLE 1

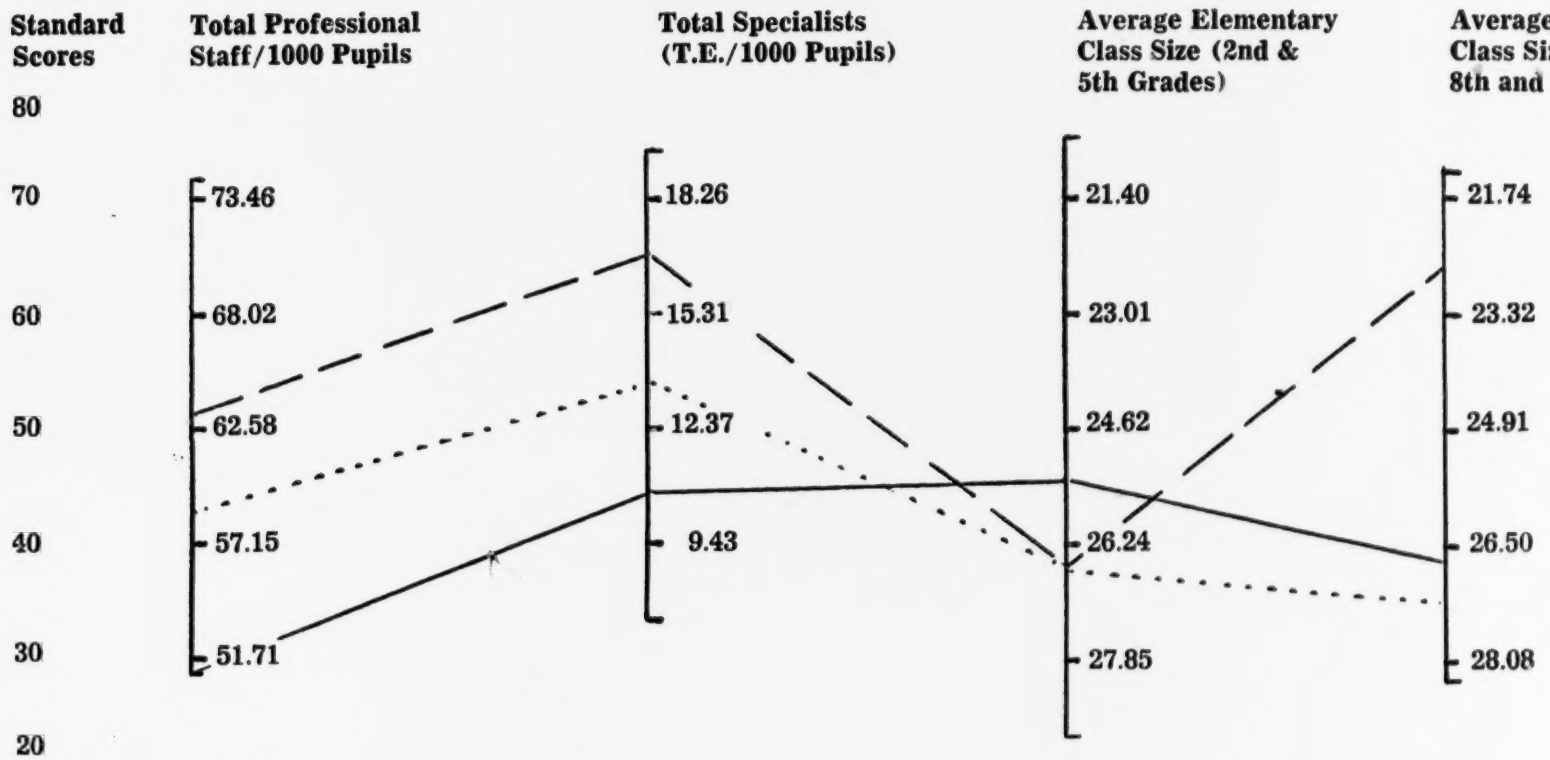
LOW TOTAL SPECIALISTS



High	73.95	19.16	20.50	21.40
Low	51.30	7.16	28.50	28.20
S.D.	5.43	2.94	1.61	1.58

TABLE 2

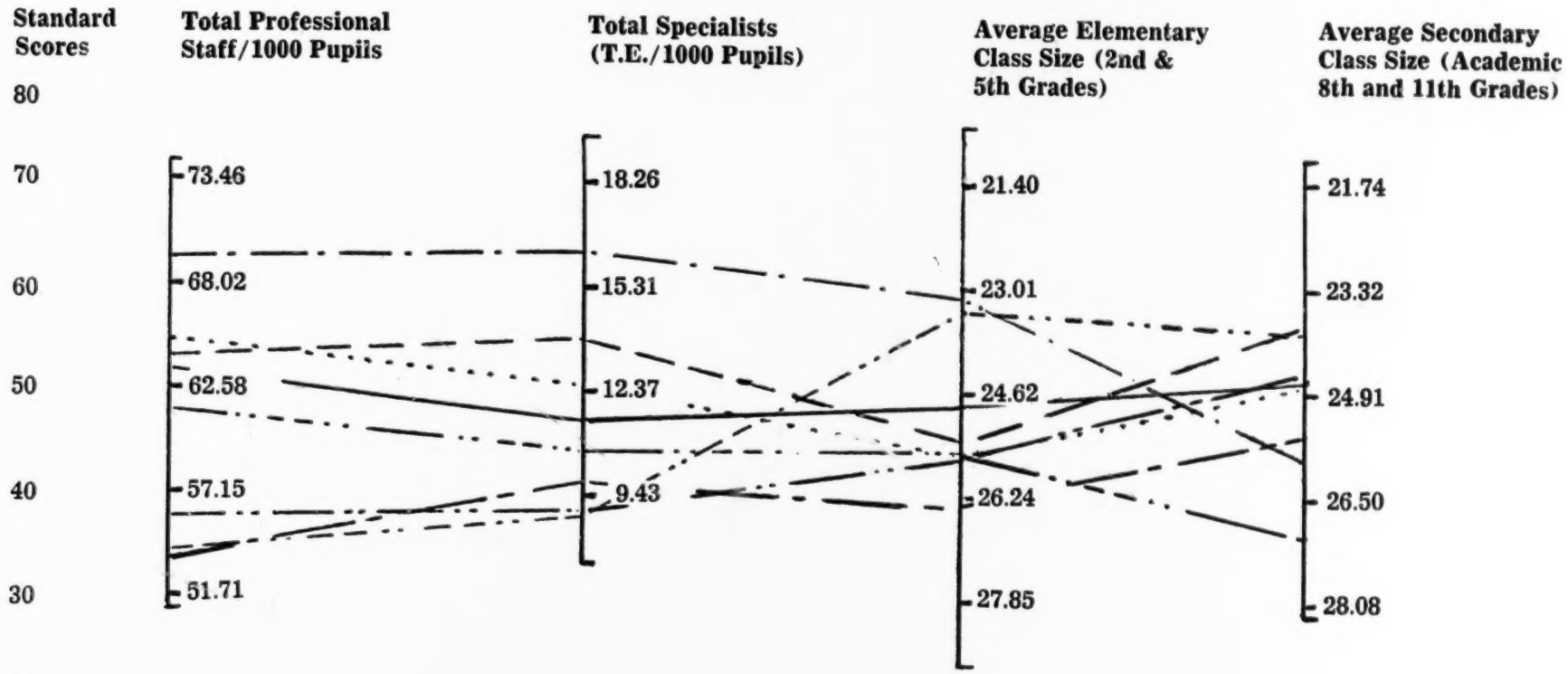
HIGH TOTAL SPECIALISTS



High	73.95	19.16	20.50	21.40
Low	51.30	7.16	28.50	28.20
S.D.	5.43	2.94	1.61	1.58

TABLE 3

UNIFORM TOTAL SPECIALISTS — UNIFORM DEPLOYMENT AMONG THE LEVELS OF OPERATION AND FUNCTIONS



High	73.95	19.16	20.50	21.40
Low	51.30	7.16	28.50	28.20
S.D.	5.43	2.94	1.61	1.58

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Research Bulletin

INSTITUTE OF ADMINISTRATIVE RESEARCH
Teachers College • Columbia University

Volume 2, No. 1 November, 1968

Devoted to research carried on by the Institute of Administrative Research and related groups, review of results, report of work in progress, discussion of theory and design, and implications for educational policies

Published in November, February and May by the Institute of Administrative Research

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